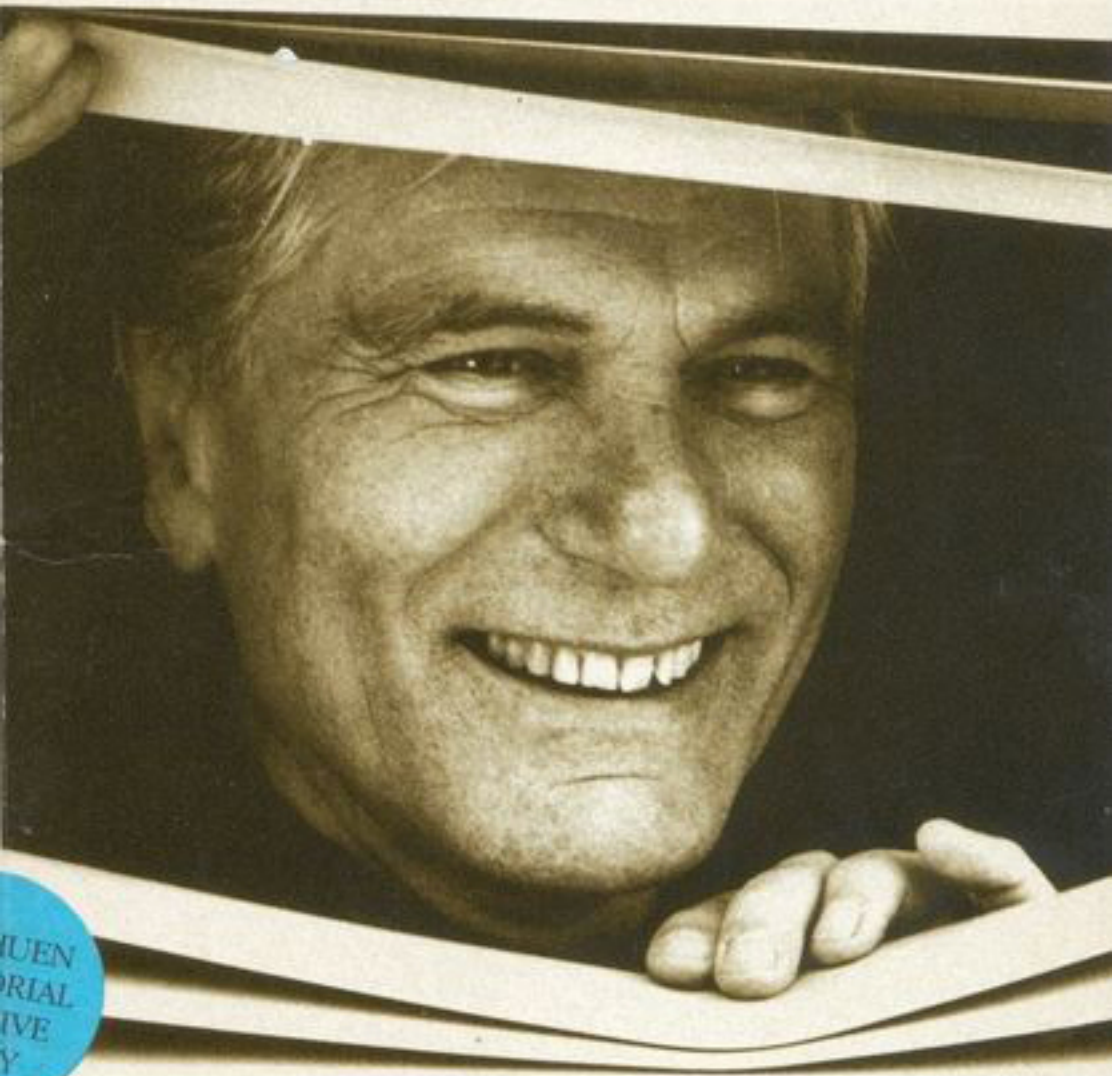
NOW YOU KNOW



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Michael Frayn

Now You Know

Terry, the charismatic director of a maverick campaign for open government, has a direct approach to official secrets and women alike. The only person who can resist his brash frankness is Hilary, a serious and dedicated young Civil Servant in the Home Office, who happens to know the truth about a big police cover-up. Until one morning she turns up at the campaign's offices with a brown envelope marked *Private and Confidential*. What eventually emerges from that envelope changes the lives of everyone involved.

Michael Frayn was born in 1933 in the suburbs of London. He began his career as a reporter on the *Guardian*, and became a columnist, first for the *Guardian*, then for the *Observer*. A selection of his columns, first published in four volumes, appeared as *The Original Michael Frayn*, and his latest volume, *Speak After the Beep*, a collection of recent *Guardian* articles, will be published in November 1995. He has written eight novels: *The Tin Men*, *The Russian Interpreter*, *Towards the End of the Morning*, *A Very Private Life*, *Sweet Dreams*, *The Trick of It*, *A Landing on the Sun* and *Now You Know*, together with a volume of philosophy, *Constructions*. He has written two original screenplays – one for the cinema, *Clockwise*, and one for television, *First and Last* – as well as numerous plays for the stage, including: *Alphabetical Order*, *Donkeys' Years*, *Clouds*, *Make and Break*, *Noises Off*, *Benefactors*, *Look Look* and *Here*. He has translated Chekhov's last four plays, dramatised a selection of his one-act plays and short stories under the title of *The Sneeze* and adapted his first, untitled play, as *Wild Honey*. He has also translated one modern Russian play – Yuri Trifonov's *Exchange*. All his plays and translations have been published by Methuen Drama.

by the same author

Plays
ALPHABETICAL ORDER
BALMORAL
BENEFACTORS
CLOCKWISE (screenplay)
CLOUDS
DONKEYS' YEARS
FIRST AND LAST (screenplay)
HERE
JAMIE ON A FLYING VISIT and BIRTHDAY (TV plays)
LISTEN TO THIS (short plays and sketches)
LOOK LOOK
MAKE AND BREAK
NOISES OFF
THE TWO OF US

Translations
EXCHANGE
NUMBER ONE
THE CHERRY ORCHARD
THE FRUITS OF ENLIGHTENMENT
THE SEAGULL
THE SNEEZE
THREE SISTERS
UNCLE VANYA
WILD HONEY
CHEKHOV: PLAYS (The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters, The Cherry Orchard and four vaudevilles)

Novels
A VERY PRIVATE LIFE
THE RUSSIAN INTERPRETER
SWEET DREAMS
THE TIN MEN
TOWARDS THE END OF THE MORNING
THE TRICK OF IT
A LANDING ON THE SUN
NOW YOU KNOW

Non-fiction
CONSTRUCTIONS

Journalism
THE ORIGINAL MICHAEL FRAYN

NOW YOU KNOW

a play in two acts
(from the novel)

MICHAEL FRAYN

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NOW YOU KNOW

Now You Know was first presented at the Hampstead Theatre, London, on 13 July 1995. The cast was as follows:

ROY	Paul Gregory
TERRY	Adam Faith
SHIREEN	Luna Rahman
JACQUI	Rosalind Ayres
LIZ	Julia Ford
KEVIN	Simon Startin
KENT	Dave Fishley
HILARY	Louise Lombard

Directed by Michael Blakemore
Designed by Hayden Griffin
Lighting by Mick Hughes
Sound by John Leonard

ACT ONE

The general office of a small political pressure-group.

The accommodation has been improvised out of attics and old storage rooms, high up under the eaves. All the arrangements are cramped and makeshift.

An outer door leads to the staircase down to the street. Beside it is a switchboard/reception desk, closed off by a sliding glass screen. Three inner doors open into a library lined with files, a smaller private office for the campaign director, and a corridor that gives access to the mailroom and to an unseen washroom.

A window opens on to the rooftops outside. A second window in an internal wall gives a little daylight to the otherwise windowless mailroom. This internal window is double-glazed, to soundproof it against the noises of the copier and printer visible inside.

Scene One

Night. SHIREEN *is on the switch. She is in her early twenties, and Asian.* KEVIN *and* KENT *are working inaudibly in the mailroom.* KEVIN *is thirty, and disabled.* KENT *is nineteen, and black.*

At the desk in the general office sits JACQUI, *in her forties, trying to work at a VDU. On the other side of the desk perches* ROY, *in his mid-thirties, holding a document.* TERRY, *who is in his late fifties, is walking up and down the room.*

ROY. And if you send it to the papers . . .

TERRY. Disclosing. Right.

ROY. Or if you go on one of your television programmes and wave it about in front of the cameras . . .

TERRY. Knowing or having reasonable cause to believe.

ROY. Knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that it is protected against disclosure . . .

TERRY. Only I don't know, do I. I haven't got no reasonable cause.

ROY (*shows document*). 'Home Office. Secret.'

The phone buzzes. SHIREEN *answers it inaudibly.*

TERRY. I'm ignorant. I can't read.

ROY. Look, I should be in a meeting. You asked me to come round . . .

TERRY. And tell us how to do it.

ROY. I'm giving you my professional opinion.

TERRY. I don't want your professional opinion how not to do it. I know how not to do it.

SHIREEN *slides back her glass screen.*

SHIREEN. Oh, Terry, it's someone, I couldn't catch his name, it's about the White Paper thing.

TERRY (*to* SHIREEN). We're a campaign for freedom of information, we get our tame brief round, and all he can tell us is how to keep information locked up.

SHIREEN. Oh, sorry.

TERRY. Put him on to Jacqui.

JACQUI. Today's the newsletter! I haven't finished the newsletter! Not to mention the membership renewals!

TERRY (*calls*). Liz!

SHIREEN. Only it's getting on for seven.

ROY (*to* TERRY). I don't know why we don't do this in your office . . .

LIZ *comes out of the library. She is in her thirties.*

TERRY. No secrets here, Roy.

ROY. Well, there is, as a matter of fact.

He indicates the document.

TERRY. Was. Isn't no longer. Not now we got our fingers on it. (*To* LIZ.) Peter Whatsit, Telegraph. White Paper. Tell him.

LIZ. Tell him what?

TERRY. Everything.

LIZ *goes back into the library.*

(*Calls.*) Tell him we got a leak from the Home Office about the Hassam case.

LIZ *comes out of the library.*

Tell him Mr Hassam was half-dead already when they put him in his cell.

ROY. Or at any rate confused, and having difficulty in breathing.

TERRY. Which is three hours before they called the doctor.

LIZ (*puzzled*). Tell the Telegraph?

TERRY. No, Liz. Don't tell no one. Roy here says send them their memo back, don't tell a soul.

SHIREEN. I'll put them through . . .

She closes her screen. LIZ *goes back into the library.*

ROY. Look, Terry . . .

He strokes the crown of his head.

TERRY. Here, put it on.

He feels in a blue cloth bag lying on the desk in front of ROY.

ROY. What?

TERRY. Your hairpiece.

He produces a barrister's wig.

Your brains'll get cold.

ROY. Terry, all I'm saying is this . . .

TERRY. Two years. I know. You're saying two years. You said it before. You said it when we done the Ministry of Defence last year. You said it when we done the Department of Trade and Industry. Well, don't you two-years me, old son, cause I know what it means, two years, and it's worse than what you think.

ROY. I know . . .

TERRY. You *don't* know, old lad.

ROY. . . . that you have personal experience . . .

TERRY. Right – theft, false pretences, and occasioning actual bodily harm.

ROY. . . . because it's in our press release.

TERRY. Though the actual was in rather special circumstances . . .

ROY. Yes, yes. But what about the others?

TERRY. . . . being more in the nature of re-educating the fellow concerned and fitting him to take his place in normal society. Others? What others? Jacqui?

JACQUI. Yes, well, don't worry about me, my loves. Just let me get on with what I'm doing. And if Terry says do it, then do it.

ROY. But we have to examine the consequences . . .

JACQUI. No, do it, do it! Tell everyone!

ROY *looks at his watch.*

ROY (*to* TERRY). I wish we could talk about this in private . . .

JACQUI. We'll all go to prison! Wonderful! The whole staff! At least I shouldn't have to write yet another appeal for contributions. At least I shouldn't have to keep on at those boys . . . What *are* they doing?

She bangs on the glass. KENT *and* KEVIN *resume work.*

ROY. Shireen – did she open the envelope? Shireen!

TERRY. Don't worry about Shireen.

SHIREEN *slides her screen back, smiling.*

SHIREEN. It's nearly seven, Terry. My mum'll kill me.

ROY. Did you open this envelope, Shireen?

SHIREEN. Yes, well, anything that says just like the name of the campaign.

She takes off her headset and emerges from the switch booth.

Because usually if it's something secret it says kind of 'Terry Little', kind of 'Private and Confidential'.

ROY. But you didn't read it.